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THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

133

Sex and psi

Masons, royalty and the Ripper

Lakes' legends: the facts

Gillan's haunted grave

Andrija Puharich

Aus & NZ $1.85 SA R1.85 IR 85p US $1.85

THE Unexplained
MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

Published weekly by Orbis Publishing Limited
Orbis House, 20/22 Bedfordbury, London WC2N 4BT

Volume 12 Issue 133

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Picture acknowledgements
Cover: Photri; Jean-Loup Charmet (inset); **2641:** Jean-Loup Charmet; **2642:** Jean-Loup Charmet (t); British Museum (b); **2643:** Bodleian Library (t); Mansell Collection (c); Ronald Sheridan (b); **2644:** Mary Evans Picture Library; **2644–2645:** Aldus Archive; **2645:** Mary Evans Picture Library (tl); Jean-Loup Charmet (tr); **2646:** John Leary; **2646–2647:** John Leary; **2647:** Spectrum (t); Popperfoto (b); **2648:** Hugh Cochrane (t); Bruce Coleman/G. Laycock (b); **2649:** Cliff Crocker; **2650:** BBC Hulton Picture Library; **2650–2651:** Ian Duncan; **2651:** Mary Evans Picture Library; **2652:** Ian Duncan (t); BBC Hulton Picture Library (b); **2653:** Ian Duncan; **2654:** Yale Joel; **2655–2656:** Andrija Puharich; **2657:** John Glover; **2658:** Jean-Loup Charmet; **2659:** National Portrait Gallery, London; **2660:** Mary Evans Picture Library

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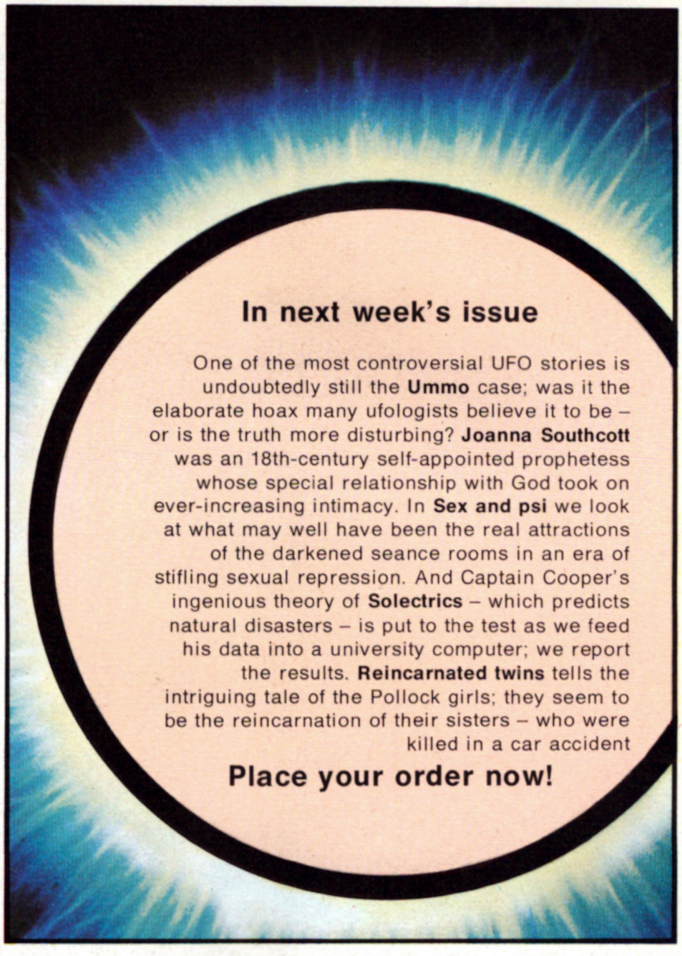

In next week's issue

One of the most controversial UFO stories is undoubtedly still the **Ummo** case; was it the elaborate hoax many ufologists believe it to be – or is the truth more disturbing? **Joanna Southcott** was an 18th-century self-appointed prophetess whose special relationship with God took on ever-increasing intimacy. In **Sex and psi** we look at what may well have been the real attractions of the darkened seance rooms in an era of stifling sexual repression. And Captain Cooper's ingenious theory of **Solectrics** – which predicts natural disasters – is put to the test as we feed his data into a university computer; we report the results. **Reincarnated twins** tells the intriguing tale of the Pollock girls; they seem to be the reincarnation of their sisters – who were killed in a car accident

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Subscription Rates
For six months (26 issues) £18.90, for one year (52 issues) £37.80. Send your order and remittance to The Unexplained Subscriptions, Punch Subscription Services, Watling Street, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, Bucks MK2 2BW, being sure to state the number of the first issue required.
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A virgin is prepared for a black mass, with the goat-horned figure of the 'priest', representing the Devil, in the background. It may be intended to conduct the ceremony over her naked body – or worse, to sacrifice her. Blood lust was a powerful means of profaning the Church's ritual – sexuality another

Sex, sin and sacrament

The sex drive has been exalted by some occultists, denounced as evil by others. FRANCIS KING explains how sexuality has been the instrument and the object of magical practices throughout history

THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN a curious ambivalence in occult attitudes towards physical sexuality. Thus some occultists and psychics have looked upon any and every sexual feeling or activity as pertaining to mankind's 'lower nature'. According to this school of thought absolute chastity – purity in thought, word and deed – is an essential prerequisite for spiritual advancement. Typical of this viewpoint was the medieval compiler of *The sworn book of Honorius*, a textbook of ritual magic, who solemnly advised his readers to 'be penitent and truly confessed of all sins, forbearing all female enticements . . . for it is better to live with a bear or a lion in its den than live with a woman'.

Other occultists and mystics have adopted a diametrically opposite point of view, regarding sexual activity as an authentic sacrament: 'the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace'. Such a sacramental use of sexual intercourse can supposedly be employed as a means of acquiring occult power and, at its highest, lead to the ultimate goal of the mystic: union with the divine.

Among the mystics who have believed this are the 16th-century writers Cornelius Agrippa and Aratus. The former described copulation as 'full of magical endowment', while Aratus claimed that:

> As the physical union of man and woman leads to the fruit from the composition of each, in the same way the interior and secret association of man and woman is the copulation of the male and female soul, and is appointed for the production of fitting fruit of the divine life.

Sexual symbolism was in common use among alchemists (see page 985) and some of them interpreted such symbolic phrases as 'the marriage of the Red King and the White Queen' not only chemically but also sexually. Some went so far as to attempt to manufacture the Philosopher's Stone – the mysterious substance that would transmute base metal into gold – from human semen. Thus 18th-century German records, quoted by Christopher McIntosh in his historical study of Rosicrucian societies, tell of an alchemical group that engaged in experiments of this sort. The leader of the group, an officer of high rank in the Austrian army, collected the raw material for this curious research by paying soldiers to masturbate.

The experiment ended in disaster. The soldiers under the officer's command were so enthusiastic to supplement their meagre pay that they neglected their military duties in order to engage in almost incessant masturbation. Eventually the regimental surgeon became aware of what was going on; the alchemical officer was reported to his commanding general and dismissed from the service. And to add insult to injury, the alchemists failed in all their attempts at transmutation.

Neither a ludicrous episode such as this nor the occasional confidence trickster who uses mysticism and the occult as an excuse to engage in sexual fun and games should be taken as an indication that all who believe sex

Above: the potency of sex is the theme of *Satana*, engraved in 1896 by the artist Fidus, who worked in Berlin. The woman is alluring, yet strangely menacing – the man seems to be in torment. His pose, reminiscent of the crucifixion, and the title of the work make an explicit link with magical sexual ritual

to be capable of leading to authentic religious experience are mad or perverted.

In the Western world there has always been a complex inter-relationship between religion and magic on the one hand and human sexuality on the other. Almost all mystical symbol systems, from astrology to the Tarot, have been given sexual interpretations. Even the Bible has been subjected to the same treatment by some commentators. Eliphas Levi (see page 2561) believed that the fall of Man, as described in Genesis, was sexual in nature: the 'original sin', which laid a perpetual curse on humanity, was Adam and Eve's first coupling. Madame Blavatsky, founder of the Theosophical Society (see page 2061), went even further: according to her the first five books of the Bible are 'the symbolical narrative of the sexes, and an apotheosis of phallicism'. By 'phallicism' she meant the worship of the male sexual organ as a manifestation of the divine.

Things not to be mentioned

Unlikely as Madame Blavatsky's assertion may seem, there may be a modicum of truth in it. Some students of the Talmud, the lengthy compilation of ancient Jewish commentaries, would agree. According to them, the 'Ark of the Covenant', the holy chest made of acacia wood that the Israelites carried during their long wanderings and eventually placed in the Temple in Jerusalem, contained a sacred stone carved in the shape of the conjoined male and female sexual organs. There would be nothing particularly surprising in this, for similar objects have been venerated by many cults. The ancient Greek 'mysteries', or initiation rituals, carried out at Eleusis, for instance, involved a rite called 'carrying things not to be mentioned'. The unmentionable things in question seem to have been a stone model of an erect penis and a hollow stone symbolising the womb of the goddess Demeter, who ruled over agriculture and fertility.

Some occultists believe that a mysterious psychic energy produces all the phenomena of the seance room, from table turning to spirit materialisation, and is at root identical with the energies that find their outlet in sex. It is the 'orgone' of Wilhelm Reich (see page 2554), the 'Od' of the 19th-century mesmerists, and the 'astral light' of Paracelsus and other magicians. Those who hold this theory point out that poltergeist activity is usually associated with a disturbed adolescent who is unable to 'earth' his or her sexual energies with a partner of the opposite sex. The occult writer Benjamin Walker has gone so far as to claim that:

> Psychic researchers have repeatedly established that the centre of poltergeist activity is often a persistent masturbator, and they believe it possible that the biomagnetic energy drawn by the 'poltergeist' is obtained during the release of sexual tension, when the masturbator reaches his or her climax. Excessive masturbation . . . has also been cited as the reason for other unexplained psychic occurrences. . . .

Whether or not 'excessive masturbation' can be productive of psychic happenings there

Right: the marriage of the Red King and the White Queen, from *Splendor solis*, a 16th-century manuscript by Salomon Trismosin. It represents, conventionally, the combination of sulphur (male) and mercury (female). The prince that will be born of this union is the Philosopher's Stone, which can transmute base metals into gold. Some alchemists interpreted such symbolism more literally and regarded sexual activity as necessary to the making of the Stone

Left: the Fall, from the Flemish *Book of hours*, of about 1500. Many occultists have interpreted the eating of the fruit of the Tree of Life as Adam and Eve's first sexual coupling. In this picture sexual shame has already overcome the pair. Their punishment is shown at the bottom of the picture: Adam shall live by the sweat of his brow, Eve shall bear children in pain, and both shall return to the ground from which they were taken

seems little doubt that at least *some* outbreaks of poltergeist activity are triggered by sexual mishaps or unhappy and complex emotional involvements. Take, for example, the so-called 'great Amherst mystery' – the poltergeist haunting that astonished the inhabitants of Nova Scotia, Canada, in the autumn of 1878. It centred on 18-year-old Esther Cox. 'Esther Cox you are mine to kill', said writing that mysteriously appeared on the wall of the girl's bedroom. The haunting featured just about every type of poltergeist activity, from outbreaks of fire and stone-throwing to Esther's stomach swelling to enormous size. This last effect was presumably the result of swallowing air, or some internal fermentation, for she reverted to her normal shapeliness after 'a loud report, like a clap of thunder but without any characteristic rumble'. This must have been one of the noisiest poltergeist bangs ever, for Esther's mother leapt to the conclusion that her home had been struck by a meteorite and rushed to the bedroom of her youngest children to see if all was well with them. She found them sleeping peacefully and the house undamaged.

If, as seems likely, the poltergeist's 'thunderclap' was Esther breaking wind with immense vigour, one is forced to consider the possibility that the knocks, bangs and drummings associated with poltergeists sometimes have a similar origin. It is perhaps significant that the noises made by the 17th-century poltergeist known as 'the drummer of Tedworth' were on at least one occasion accompanied by a 'mysterious sulphurous smell', which 'those present found very offensive'. No such smells were reported by those who witnessed the Amherst hauntings; perhaps there were none, or, more likely, Victorian sensibilities prevented them from being mentioned.

These allegedly paranormal happenings were almost certainly triggered off by an experience undergone by Esther on 28 August 1878, exactly eight days before the supposed poltergeist first manifested itself. It involved Esther's boy friend, a certain Bob McNeal.

It is probable that for some time Bob had been making overt sexual advances to Esther, for on the night of 27 August she had a nightmare replete with Freudian symbolism, clearly expressing the girl's fear of male sexuality. In this dream all Esther's relatives had been magically transformed into huge bears with red eyes. When she opened the front door of her home she was horrified to see hundreds of black bulls, blood dripping from their muzzles, converging on the house. She slammed the door shut and bolted it, but the bulls continued their advance, butting their huge horns against the house. The building shook under the concerted assault – and then Esther awoke.

On the evening of the day following this ominous dream Bob McNeal took Esther for a drive in a two-seater buggy, which he had borrowed or hired. They drove together into

Eleusis, near Athens, was a holy site from the earliest times. The phallic figurine (above left) dates from before 2000 BC. The plaque (left) dates from the fourth century BC and depicts the 'mysteries' – the rites of initiation into the cult of Demeter, goddess of agriculture, and Persephone, her daughter. In the centre is an *omphalos*, a rounded rock representing the navel of the world; below it are ritual objects strongly suggestive of male and female sex organs

the surrounding wooded countryside. Bob reined in the horse and began to make amorous advances to Esther, urging her to walk into the woods with him. When she consistently refused – it would seem that she was prepared to indulge in a little light petting in the buggy but nothing more – McNeal lost his temper. He pulled out a pistol, pointed it at the girl's head, and ordered her to accompany him into the woods. She still refused and for a moment it seemed that McNeal would shoot her dead. Fortunately, however, another vehicle approached, the alarmed McNeal pocketed his pistol, snatched up the horse's reins, and drove Esther to her home. That night he left Amherst, presumably in fear of being charged with attempted rape, and was never heard of again.

Right: Hereward Carrington, psychical researcher, traced and interviewed Esther Cox, a famous poltergeist victim, who many years before had been plagued by poltergeist disturbances at her home (below right) in Amherst, Nova Scotia. The house was almost wrecked by some of the outbreaks. Carrington found that the phenomena had not recurred since Esther's marriage – possibly due to the release of her sexual energies

In a sense, however, he remained with Esther for many years. The sexual cravings and fears that McNeal had aroused seem to have built up in Esther a pressure of psychic energy – a sort of impending libidinal thunderstorm – which, failing to find an outlet in the ecstasy of orgasm, powered the 'spontaneous combustions', 'levitations' and other psychic wonders that astonished the citizens of Amherst.

Many years later Hereward Carrington, the psychical investigator, traced and interviewed Esther, by then married and living in the United States. She was reluctant to talk about the past, but made a most significant admission. From the day of her wedding, she said, 'the power' had left her; she was again a stranger to the 'paranormal'.

Some of those occultists and psychical researchers who assert that the 'subtle forces' of the seance room and the sexual currents of the libido are manifestations of one mysterious energy believe that it can be transferred from one person to another. In this way, so it is suggested, the old can, accidentally or by design, draw in the life force from a younger person for their own benefit.

The use of this curious psychic technique has a long history. It is often called 'Shunamitism', from an incident recorded in the Old Testament:

> Now King David was old and stricken in years . . . he gat no heat. Wherefore his servants said unto him, Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin . . . and let her lie in thy bosom, that my lord the king may get heat. So they sought for a fair damsel throughout all the coasts of Israel, and found Abishag a Shunammite, and brought her to the king. And the damsel was very fair and cherished the king, and ministered to him. . . .

Abishag regularly slept with David but did not have sexual intercourse with him, for this would have 'earthed' the life force and frustrated their intention.

The same technique was used in classical Greece and Rome, seemingly with considerable success. Latin historians record, for example, the remarkable case of a certain L. Claudius Hermippus who, when he reached the age of 70, began to feel a waning of his physical and mental powers. He immediately began to sleep with young virgins, though, like King David, without sexual activity. His tombstone recorded that he lived to the age of 115, owing to 'the emanations of young maidens, causing great wonder to all physicians'.

Many European rulers of the Middle Ages

Barbarossa (Frederick I of Germany) revived his failing energies by bodily contact with young boys. The cure may have been surprisingly successful: legend has it that he did not die but merely sleeps (above). King David's tonic (right) was the embrace of Abishag

practised Shunamitism, sometimes in a homosexual variant. Thus the Emperor Barbarossa held young boys against his stomach and genitals in order to 'savour and absorb their energy'; Pope Innocent VIII, the immediate predecessor of the Borgia pope, Alexander VI, employed healthy young children to stroke him and thus transfer their energy to him.

Some physicians of the time held that this life energy was strongly concentrated in youthful blood, and Ficino, a Platonic philosopher who also practised medicine, suggested that vampirism should be employed by those enfeebled by age. The old, he said, should drink fresh blood drawn from youthful veins 'after the manner of leeches'.

Shunamitism survived into the 18th century and, in both Paris and London, was practised on a commercial basis. For example, 'Madame Janus' of Paris owned a successful establishment that at one time was reputed to give employment to over 40 virgins. A client's course of treatment lasted for three weeks. Each night he was given a 'magical bath' containing herbs, then massaged with aromatic oils, and finally tucked into bed between two virgins, one blonde and one brunette. The treatment was, of course, expensive and had to be paid for in advance. In addition Madame Janus insisted that each client deposit a substantial sum of money with her. This was to be forfeited by any man who was so rejuvenated that he deflowered one of his sleeping partners.

A similar establishment, the 'temple of Aurora', was conducted in London by Mrs Anna Fawkland, whose clients were reputed to include elderly aristocrats such as Lords Buckingham and Cornwallis.

A belief in the efficacy of this almost vampire-like technique for acquiring psychosexual energy was among the strangely assorted articles of faith of Heinrich Himmler, sinister chief of the Nazi SS. Himmler, as well as carrying out his unpleasant duties with dry efficiency, spent much time thinking about such unlikely problems as the mystic symbolism of Gothic architecture and 'the occult significance of the Etonian top hat'. In 1940 he became concerned about the number of Luftwaffe pilots who died from exposure after parachuting into the North Sea. He decided that if such pilots were picked up while still alive they would probably recover if they were placed between the bodies of naked girls. To test this hypothesis SS physicians carried out a series of experiments in which concentration camp inmates were placed in tanks of freezing water until they became unconscious and were then put to bed between naked girls.

The efforts of the women revived several victims to a point at which they achieved coitus. But this depraved parody of Shunamitism did not lead to a higher recovery rate overall than did orthodox methods of warming the experimental subjects.

On page 2674: shady goings-on at seances and seduction by magic

Great Lakes, great fakes?

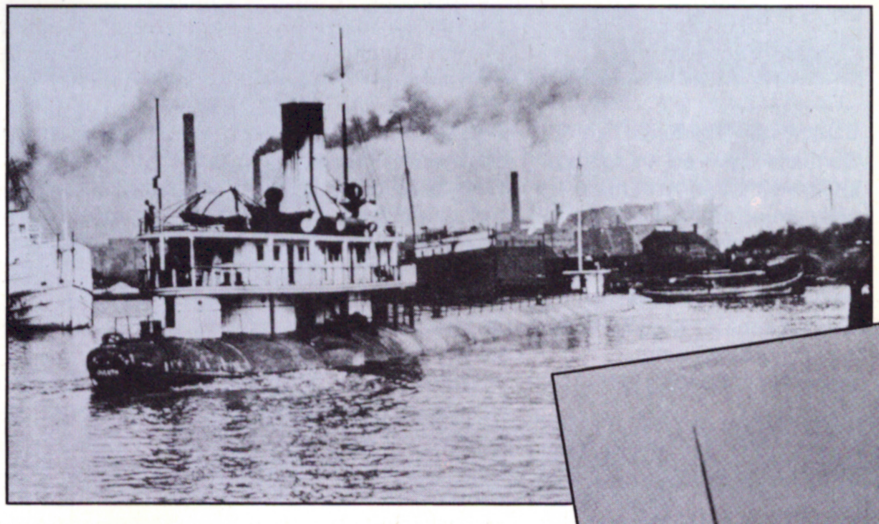
Does a sinister force lurk in the waters of the Great Lakes of America? An abnormally high number of ships and aircraft disappear there every year – but, as FRANK SMYTH suggests, there may be nothing mysterious involved

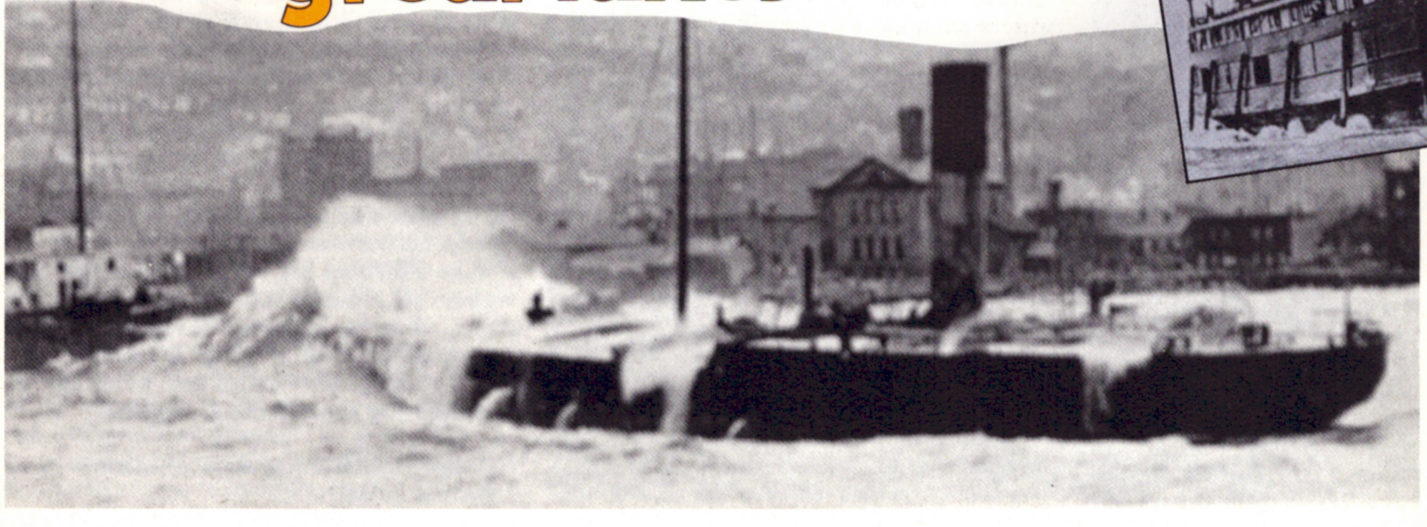
OF ALL THE MYSTERIOUS 'paranormal' – and generally elusive – phenomena that appear around the Great Lakes of North America, one curiosity appears regularly for all to see. It is the 'Three Sisters' – the trio of giant waves that travels with all-engulfing force, suddenly and without warning, across the tranquil surfaces (see page 2610). The local Chippewa Indians believed that this phenomenon was caused by the stirrings of a gigantic sturgeon; but modern locals call it the 'Seiche' – pronounced 'sesh' – from the Swiss French, for it also occurs on Lake Geneva.

On 26 June 1954 a Seiche wave struck the coastline of Lake Michigan between Whiting, Indiana, and Wakegan, Illinois, devastating property, sweeping 50 people into the water and drowning eight of them. Most of the victims were fishing on the shore, and survivors said that they had no inkling of disaster until the 10-foot (3-metre) roller appeared and crashed over them. In his book *The Great Lakes Triangle*, author Jay Gourley describes the case of how such a wave overtook and sank the *James E. Davidson*, a 6000-tonne grain carrier on Lake Superior. Gourley asks, 'What force was behind the strange devastating wave? From where did it come? What power generated it? How could it be so accurately directed as to send a perfectly seaworthy ship to the bottom?'

These are fascinating questions indeed – but, apart from Gourley's implication that the wave was 'directed' by some intelligent power, they are readily answered by meteorologists, although even they seem uncertain as to the precise physical laws that govern the raising of Seiche waves. Generally speaking, they are long rollers that occur in the relatively shallow waters of a lake, bay or harbour, although they can sometimes travel across the Atlantic Ocean, building up in the relatively shallow areas of continental shelves. They vary in height from 3 or 4 inches (8 or 12 centimetres) to 30 feet (10 metres) and more, and they may be generated by a variety of atmospheric disturbances, high winds, or even small seismic stirrings in the bed of the lake itself.

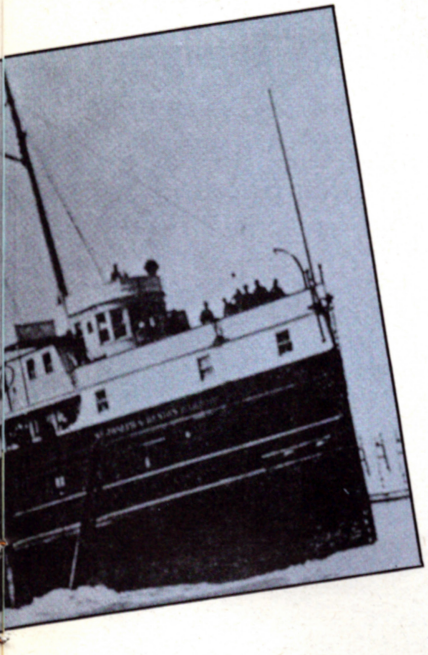
Although the Great Lakes are vast in area, they are surprisingly shallow, varying in average depth between 200 and 600 feet (60 and 180 metres), with only Lake Superior plummeting to occasional depths of 1300 feet (400 metres). This lack of depth means that strong winds can quickly whip up the lakes'





Some of the victims of the Great Lakes. The freighter *Mataafa* (bottom) sank in shallow waters within sight of the harbour of Duluth, Minnesota, USA, in the 'blow' of 1905; the wooden freight and passenger steamer *Chicura* (below right) disappeared on Lake Michigan on 21 January 1895; and the whaleback steamer *Samuel Mather* (below) was lost with all hands on Lake Huron on 22 September 1924

Above: Lake Geneva, on the borders of Switzerland and France. It is from an all-engulfing trio of waves that occasionally appears on Lake Geneva that the dreaded Seiche wave of the American Great Lakes gets its name



Right: Sir Francis Chichester aboard *Gypsy Moth IV* at the end of his epic 28,500-mile (48,000-kilometre) journey round the world in 1967. Near Cape Horn, *Gypsy Moth IV* was apparently turned right over and set upright again by waves rolling against her side. The same phenomenon may have scuppered many a heavier vessel on the Great Lakes

surfaces to the violence and destructiveness of Atlantic storms, and in summer they are unpredictable. In winter, however, they conform to a pattern of behaviour that rarely varies; in November they are lashed with violent winds and spume-topped waves before icing over, making shipping movement feasible only when the coastal regions are cleared by ice-breakers. And in April, as the ice melts, the storms rule the waves until the six-month season of deep-water navigation begins once more.

In view of these Seiche waves and the regular storms on the Great Lakes, the disappearance of shipping becomes easier to understand. In navigation of any kind, whether by sailing ship or by motor vessel, the ideal is to keep the ship's head into the wind and weather, 'beating to windward'; in foul weather, this is generally the safest course a sailing ship can pursue. The two most dangerous points of sailing are 'running' and 'reaching'; in the former, the wind is 'abaft the beam' – that is to say, blowing from the direction of the stern – and in the latter, the wind is blowing against the side of the ship, tending to make her heel over. On enclosed waters such as the Great Lakes, the waves tend to run in the same direction as the wind, making sailing doubly hazardous, for if a vessel presents her beam to the waves she is likely to 'broach to' or roll dangerously in the trough of the seas between the waves, while if she is running before a following sea that is moving faster than she is, she may be 'pooped' – the following sea will break over her stern, engulfing her. The same thing is likely to happen if she stops dead with her head to a breaking sea.

These are, of course, simple generalisations. Navigation is a complicated business, but these examples do give an indication of what may have happened to several of the vessels cited by Gourlay, and by Hugh F. Cochrane in his *Gateway to oblivion*, as 'mysteriously' disappearing.

The two American sailing frigates *Scourge* and *Hamilton* that rolled over together on their way down Lake Ontario to Niagara in 1812 and sank, show all the signs of having being broached by a Seiche wave. They were sailing in calm weather and light airs, so they probably had topsails and royals – the uppermost square-sails on a sailing ship – set. Many a small boat has been rolled right over and set upright again by a beam sea – waves rolling against the vessel's side; the late Sir Francis Chichester reported that this happened to his *Gypsy Moth IV* on his voyage around Cape Horn. The spread of canvas on the upper masts of the two frigates, however, would prevent any tendency the ships had to right themselves, and they would sink.

In the case of the tug *Sachem*, which sank in calm weather outward bound from Buffalo in 1950, a bow wave would seem to be the likeliest cause of the disaster. She was found on the bottom of the lake with her engine controls in a 'stop' position and her bridge windows broken in. It seems likely that the officer on watch, seeing the 'Three Sisters' travelling head on towards him, rang up 'stop engines' on the engine-room telegraph before the wave engulfed the tug and drove her to the bottom, smashing the bridge windows in the process. It is possible that if he had rung up 'full ahead' the *Sachem* would have weathered the impact.

Gourley, at least, makes a mystery of the case of the *Edmund Fitzgerald* when the facts show that there is little or none. A report in the *Buffalo Evening News* states that winds of over 90 miles per hour (140 km/h) were blowing, and the November gales had raised waves of 25 feet (8 metres). The freighter was over 700 feet (210 metres) long, with a 26,000-tonne cargo of iron ore, and her

captain reported that water had shipped into the hold amidships shortly before she 'disappeared'. If the labouring vessel had been caught with 25-foot (8-metre) waves at bow and stern and a trough in the middle, there is surely little wonder that she was, as Hugh Cochrane puts it, 'sliced cleanly in two'.

The disappearance of aircraft in the Great Lakes area becomes equally understandable when taken in conjunction with the freak weather conditions prevalent locally. Sudden fogs have always been a feature of the peculiar atmospheric conditions – fogs that freeze very quickly in the bitter winter months. Paul Cena, a professional pilot who flies regularly in the Great Lakes area, reported in the US journal *Skeptical Inquirer* in the summer of 1982:

> It is foolish for a pilot to fly over a body of water as large as any of the Great Lakes [in a light aircraft] . . . even though engine failure is rare, if it should occur, the pilot would have to make a water landing. In a plane not equipped with floats, this is dangerous to say the least. During my flight instruction, I was told to fly around a lake, not over it.

In calm conditions, it has been estimated that a small, light aircraft will float on water for an average of 30 seconds; in any kind of rough water, the sinking time is much reduced – and a damaged aircraft, coming down in an uncontrolled dive, will of course sink on impact. Cochrane mentions at least two instances of light aircraft found with their wings 'sliced' off, but this may, in fact, not be so very sinister – or even remarkable. Many Great Lakes pilots report near-misses with flocks of birds, particularly heavy birds such as the Canadian wild geese that inhabit the coastal zones; and a collision at full speed with one of these could cause extremely severe damage to the flimsy metal skin of a small aircraft.

Even if a pilot manages to bail out or make an emergency landing, the danger is not over. Much of the shoreline of the lakes is rough and wild. In one stretch of bushland on the north side of Lake Superior, with an area of about 45,000 square miles (120,000 square kilometres), an average of 100 lives a year are lost. Most of the victims of this inhospitable terrain are hunters and fishermen, though small-boat sailors and pilots who have had to abandon their craft have swelled their numbers. In an interview with the *Toronto Sun* Mac Nicholson, who leads a local search and rescue group of 250 volunteers, said: 'It causes a type of claustrophobia. Everything just closes in. Their minds go blank and they run themselves to exhaustion. They'll bull blindly through the thickest bush. The worst one I've seen, we had to put him into a straight jacket. He ran into the search line and we had to throw him down and hang onto him.'

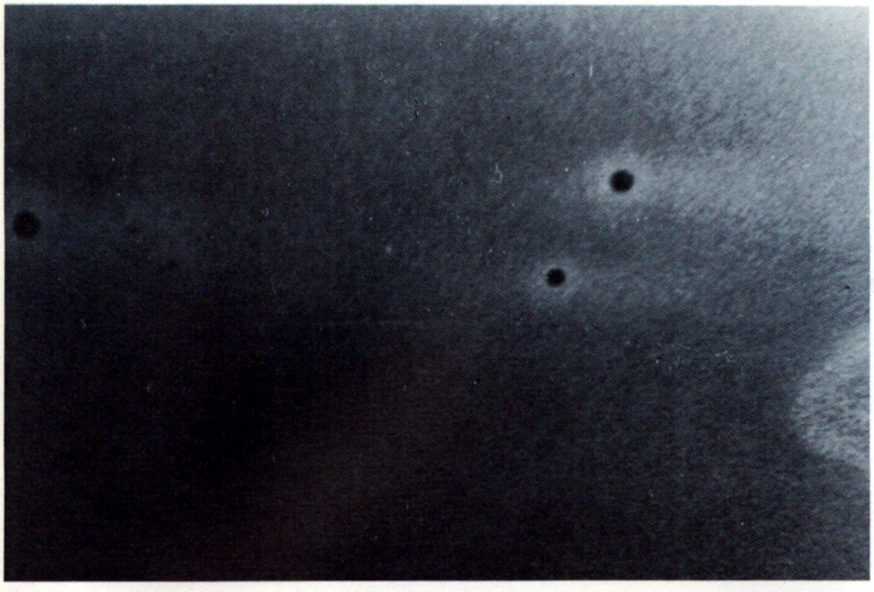
Both Cochrane and Gourley mention cases of aircraft vanishing within minutes of reaching their destination without sending out a distress call of any kind. Again, a look at the facts offers a ready explanation for this. According to a recent issue of the US magazine *Plane and Pilot* 'most . . . fatal stall/spins occur in the traffic pattern where chances of recovery are almost nil' – in other words, while the plane is circling the airport awaiting permission to land. An inexperienced pilot may inadvertently let his air speed drop in such situations, thus precipitating a spin.

'Another cause of accidents,' writes Paul Cena, 'is simple pilot error':

> After a pilot has been flying for a while, he or she may become over confident. Many accidents occur when a pilot doesn't . . . get a weather briefing

Above: the bodies of sailors washed up on the shores of Lake Ontario are buried in this graveyard in Prince Edward County, Ontario, Canada

Below: a flock of Canada geese in flight. Aircraft pilots have often reported near-collisions with flying birds over the Great Lakes – and it is easy to imagine how some of the mysterious accidents involving light aircraft in the area may actually have been caused by collisions with large birds such as these



red or white orbs that appear to wax and wane and, when viewed through binoculars, are seen to be in pairs. And the majority of instances have been seen in November, over water.

Every aircraft is required to carry navigation lights – a red light to port, a green light to starboard, and a white or golden light on the tail fin or on top of the fuselage. Seen over the waters of a lake on a pitch black night – with the possibility of reflections over the water – it needs little imagination to turn a small aircraft whose outline is invisible into a 'UFO'. But the waxing and waning pairs of lights need a little more explanation: navigation lights do not vary in intensity.

In the early 1970s, a case of 'spook lights' was investigated near Joplin, Missouri, in the 'tri-state' area of the United States. Viewed through binoculars, the spooks appeared as pairs of lights that seemed to

> or when a non-instrument-rated pilot is caught in instrument conditions. Pilot error leaves no evidence.

Certainly a pilot with instrument rating would not be unduly discomfited by fog.

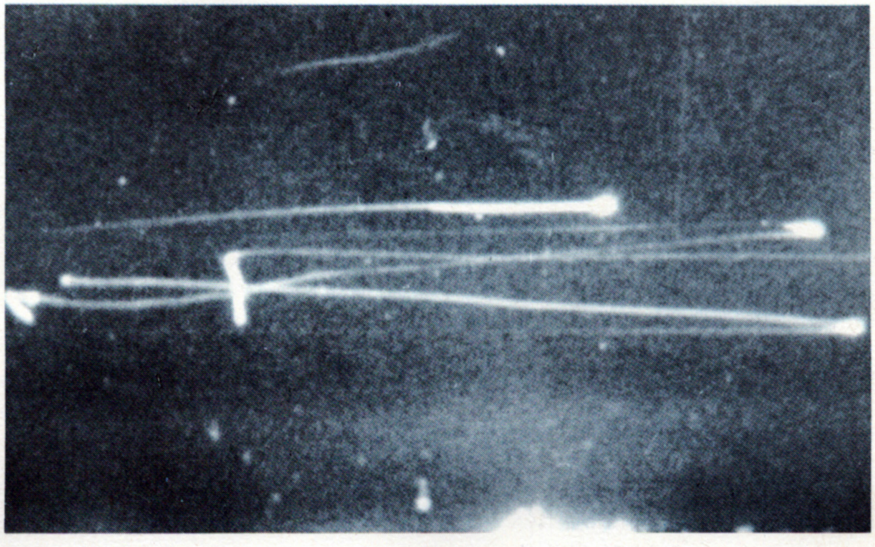
Yet another regular mishap with aircraft around the Great Lakes is carburettor icing; the temperature of the carburettor can be as much as 70° F (40° C) colder than the outside air temperature, so that even on a warm day, carburettor heating has to be switched on; in the winter over the Canadian border, delay can be instantly fatal.

Superheated UFO

Gourley, Cochrane, and J. Allen Hynek and Jacques Vallée in their book *The edge of reality*, quote the case of the American F-94 Starfire jet whose pilot and radar operator were forced to bail out when their cockpit became 'superheated' while pursuing what they believed to be a UFO over New York State in July 1954. Donald Keyhoe, in his *Aliens from space*, says: 'An F-94 Starfire was scrambled . . . when a gleaming, disc-shaped machine became visible he started to close in . . . abruptly, a furnace-like heat filled both cockpits. . . .'

The full story was told in dead-pan terms by the *Buffalo Courier-Express* two days after the incident. 'On a routine training mission . . . they were ordered by radio to investigate a third, unidentified airplane. They checked and found the plane to be friendly and started to return to their base. . . . Fire broke out in the forward part . . . and the pilot and his radar operator parachuted from their red-hot cockpit at 7,000 feet [2100 metres].'

So much for the most famous of the Great Lakes UFO stories. But what of the many other instances quoted by Gourley and Cochrane? Without examining each case in detail, it is fair to say that the majority have a number of factors in common: lights have been seen, usually alternately flashing red, green and white or golden, but sometimes



Vigorous UFO activity continues to be reported from the Great Lakes area. Many of the reports concern nocturnal lights – such as this one (above), photographed in a time exposure over Toronto – that may more easily be explained as aircraft navigation lights. Some, however, are more difficult to account for: this picture (top) is of apparently light-*absorbing* UFOs photographed over the western end of Lake Ontario

bounce gently towards the observer before fading, and they were often accompanied by smaller pairs of red lights. After careful investigation they were proved to be the lights of traffic on the Creek River road, about 20 miles (30 kilometres) distant, refracted by freak conditions from the surface of the Spring River, a tributary of the Arkansas; there was, after all, nothing mysterious about them.

To be fair, each UFO case should be treated individually and investigated using the evidence available; but it seems reasonable to suppose that what happened in Joplin could – given the known eccentricity of the weather conditions – be duplicated over the Great Lakes. Sudden mists can play bizarre games with moonlight, which may account for some of the 'sightings' made before the introduction of car headlights. Nature herself has endowed Lakes Superior, Michigan, Erie, Huron and Ontario with mystery enough; speculation that they form a new mystery area with destructive powers similar to those of the now discredited 'Bermuda Triangle' seems, in the circumstances, superfluous.

Turning in his grave

Why does the ghost of the wretched Alexander Gillan linger at the site of his execution on a lonely Scottish moor? Was he innocent of the murder for which he was ignominiously hanged? FRANK SMYTH tells the story

The Muir of Stynie, the lonely moor shunned by locals for fear of the ghost of murderer Alexander Gillan. Charles Hope, Lord Justice Clerk to the Scottish Sessions (right), was the judge who convicted Gillan. A man of imposing presence, with a magnificent voice and a gift for declamation, he had the reputation for being brutally harsh to felons

THE LOW-LYING COAST of Morayshire, around the mouth of the River Spey in Scotland, has always been a bleak and desolate place, a natural breeding ground for stories of the supernatural. There is a black dog with 'eyes like cogies' (whisky tumblers) that prowls through the local forests; the Red Fisherman who foretells death; and the 'Auld Guidman', once the local landlord, who still guards the Bog of Gight with a medieval claymore (two-edged broadsword).

The best known story, as convincing now as it was 170 years ago, is of the ghost of Alexander Gillan that is said to stalk the Muir of Stynie. Apparently, even Crown Forestry workers and gamekeepers avoid this area at night for fear of meeting his ghost on a cart track known as 'Gillan's Way'.

Alexander Gillan was a farm labourer who lived alone in the hamlet of Lhanbryde. One story has it that he was an Irish immigrant, disliked and distrusted by his neighbours,

The town of Inverness, where Alexander Gillan stood trial. After being convicted he was kept in its pestilential Tolbooth jail on a diet of bread and water until, on the day of his execution, he was cast into a tumbril and taken to the scene of his crime to be hanged

another that he was a half-witted orphan. One misty night in August 1810, a 10-year-old girl named Elspet Lamb disappeared while walking from her father's croft at Lhanbryde to the hamlet of Urquhart, 2 miles (3 kilometres) away. The next morning the men-at-arms from Elgin searched the surrounding moors and forests while prayers were offered in the local kirk for her safety. Alexander Gillan was present in the congregation. The hunters used tracker dogs and soon found the girl's body in a thicket on the Muir of Stynie, 'her head battered open'.

A pair of blood-stained trousers was found in a nearby trench, which locals quickly identified as belonging to Alexander Gillan. He was arrested just as the kirk service finished, wearing his 'best breeks' (trousers). He was charged with 'molesting' and murdering Elspet Lamb and taken to Inverness to be tried. The date for the trial was fixed for 29 September 1810.

Gillan, unfortunately, appeared before Charles Hope, Lord Justice Clerk to the Scottish Sessions. Hope was a self-made man, who had risen from being a poor law student to Member of Parliament for Edinburgh. He was a high Tory, thought by many to be a disciplinarian and a snob, who nevertheless endeared himself to the Scottish gentry by his 'integrity, kindness and gentleman-like manners'. However, when sitting as a judge he seemed to abandon these qualities and could be brutally harsh with those appearing before him. His judicial contemporary Lord Cockburn described him as being 'greatly wanting in tact and judgement'.

According to the Inverness records, the case against Gillan was considered watertight even though the trousers were not positively identified as being his, and though he was not questioned as to his whereabouts on the night of the crime.

At the trial he clutched a crumpled piece

of paper from which he attempted to read, but he was not given any opportunity to speak in his own defence. Instead, with the black cap lying beside him, Hope launched into a 10-minute declamation that must be one of the most spine-chilling judgements ever handed out:

> I look upon any punishment you can receive in this world as mercy. Did you flatter yourself that if you escaped detection and conviction, you could have lived and taken your place amongst the decent-living and industrious, amidst the daily avocations [occupations] of your fellow men?
>
> The mangled corpse of this innocent child would have unceasingly haunted you. Her departed spirit would have drawn aside your curtain at midnight, and horror and remorse and despair would surely have driven you, at length, to take vengeance upon yourself.

Even God found crimes such as Gillan's hard to forgive, said the judge, particularly as

> . . . it was no small aggravation of your foul deed that you went reeking with the blood of your victim to The Temple of the Lord, impiously to mix with God-fearing people while they offered up their prayers. You thought that by going to Church, assuming the solemn appearance and devout conduct of Christian people, you would be able to conceal your guilt . . . but . . . you lost that composure which a conscience at ease bestows . . . so the House of God to which you had impiously fled to cover your wickedness became a means of bringing your guilt to the light of day.'

The 'red kirk' of Lhanbryde, where men-at-arms arrested Gillan as he was leaving after the service

Bereft of burial

The Lord Justice Clerk ordered pastors to attend Gillan during his last days in order that he might prepare himself for death.

> But it is decreed that a criminal such as you shall be bereft of all burial and that his body shall not be permitted to descend into its Mother Earth like those of Christians. I have resolved to make you a lasting and memorable example of the fate which awaits the commission of such deeds as yours.
>
> The situation of the countryside in which your crime was committed, its vast woods, its uninhabited moors, and the solitude which reigns over it are but too well calculated for outrages such as yours. I am therefore anxious that these extensive wilds may be traversed by every person of both sexes at all times, even in the hours of darkness, with confidence and security. It is my duty to make them as safe as the streets of this town.
>
> I have therefore determined that after your execution you shall be hung suspended in chains until the birds of the air pick the flesh off your body, and your bones bleach and moulder in the winds of heaven, thereby to afford a continuing warning of the consequences of doing as you did and operating, I hope, as an example for the prevention of such crimes, and for procuring the safety of all people proceeding around the region. Therefore . . . you . . . shall be taken from the prison and on some convenient part of the moor near to the place where the crime was committed be hanged by the neck until you are dead. This I pronounce for doom. And may God almighty have mercy on your soul.

Henry Gordon, seventh Duke of Richmond (1845–1928), who agreed in 1911 that Gillan's gibbet was a public nuisance and should be taken down and buried where it stood. When a hole was dug, the remains of a human skeleton were discovered

On the morning of Wednesday, 14 November, Alexander Gillan, weak from a diet of bread and water only, was driven the 40 miles (64 kilometres) south to the Muir of Stynie in a cart. There, in the dying winter light, a 12-foot (3.6-metre) high oaken gallows had been erected; beside it on the ground lay what the *Huntly Express* described as 'an ingenious device, a cage of bands and chains and swivels'.

Bundled off without a word

Gillan had had no opportunity to speak out at his trial, nor did he have one now. Still clutching a piece of paper, he was bundled up the ladder by a hangman and, 'the noose being tightened around his neck he was swung off into eternity with . . . the piece of paper from which he had intended to read the statement of his sorrow and repentance.'

As soon as he was dead the body was taken down and shackled into the iron cage, and then this was hoisted up and hung from the gallows. The officials then withdrew down a rutted track, which quickly became known as 'Gillan's Way'.

However, at dawn the following morning the body had gone, though the cage was still there. The men-at-arms questioned local villagers at Lhanbryde, Urquhart and

Garmouth but nobody divulged anything.

In spite of this, the gallows and the cage were left where they were. Charles Hope died 41 years later in 1851, but the gallows were to outlast him by 60 years. The solid oak, swivels and rusting chains withstood the corrosive sea mists 'becoming', according to the *Northern Scot* newspaper, 'a nuisance to those living nearby. In the gentlest breezes the ironwork rattled and groaned, but in a gale the swivels spun and squealed and were heard for miles downwind.'

Quite soon, people reported a different kind of nuisance. Those who had been down Gillan's Way said they had seen the shadowy figure of Alexander Gillan lurking beneath the pine trees. For weeks after his death people said that the scrap of paper that he had been clutching had been seen blowing about beneath the gallows. But no one dared pick it up and read it.

The cross that marks Gillan's grave. Made, it is said, from an arm of the gallows on which he was hanged, it has weathered the years remarkably well. A strong iron rivet was driven through its centre, presumably in accordance with the tradition that iron stakes keep the unhallowed dead from 'walking'. But the locals still avoid the area of 'Gillan's Way', especially after dark

One hundred and one years after the hanging, the then Duke of Richmond agreed that 'Gillan's gibbet' was a public nuisance and he ordered it to be taken down and buried at that very spot. While a trench was being dug human bones were unearthed. The Duke was immediately told and he went, with a local doctor, to investigate. The doctor identified one of the bones as a man's thigh bone. The remaining bones were left where they were. Obviously, someone had lowered the cage, taken Gillan out and buried him there and then. The Duke had the bones replaced, the gallows laid on top of them and the trench filled in. Later, a cross (reputedly made from the arm of the gallows, presumably by a local) was erected on the spot.

A cross marks the spot

The cross is still there, though very few people, even locals, know its exact location. It is made of rock-hard, weathered oak, and has a great iron rivet driven through its centre.

The person who showed the author the site said:

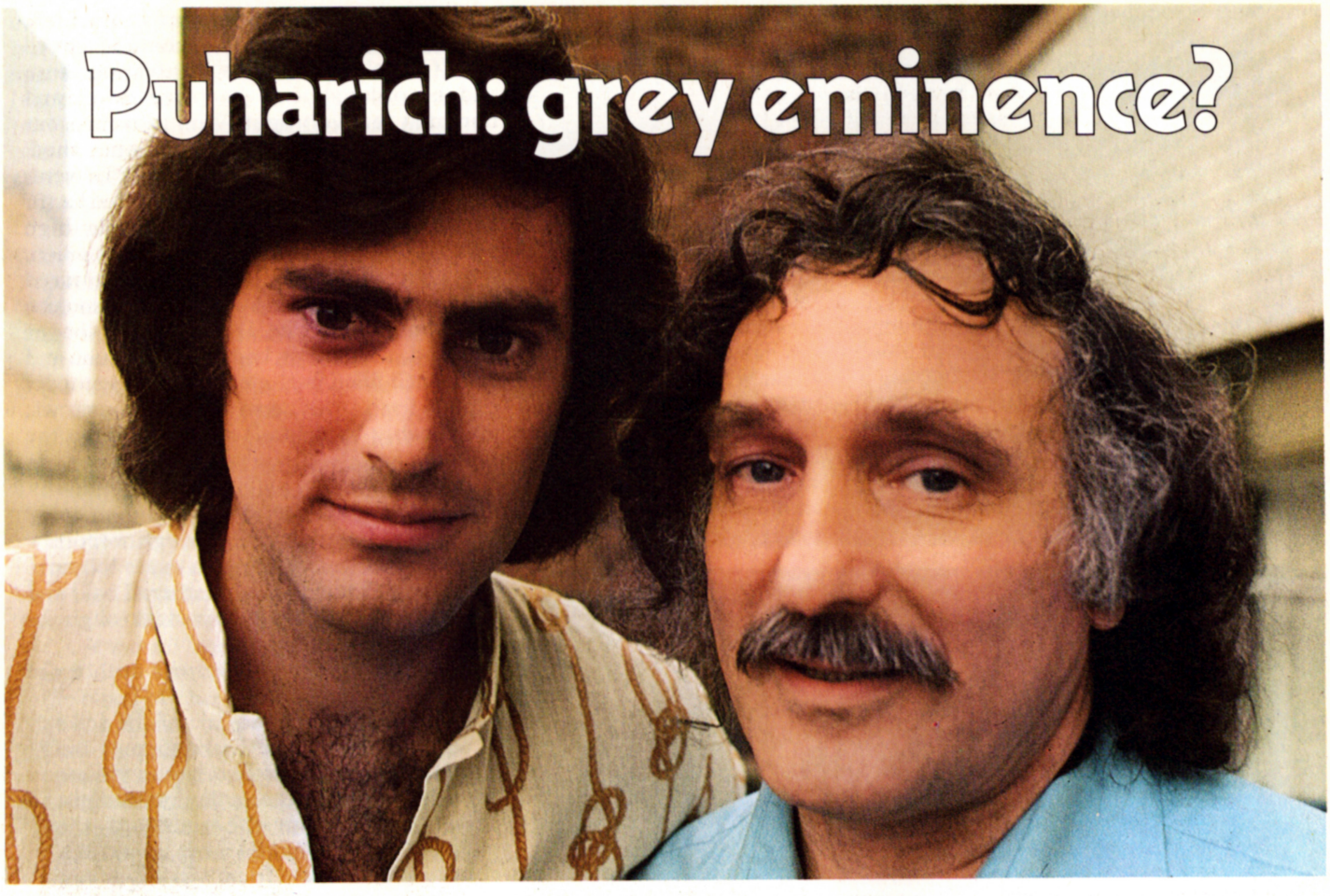
> My grandmother was one of the folks who petitioned the Duke to pull the gallows down. Our family was closest to the site and never a day nor a night went by without the sound of the gibbet stirring. I remember, as a child, myself and some friends tried to put flowers on the grave in the summer, and a keeper caught us at it. He was angry; he said that it was unhallowed ground, and no good would come of laying flowers there as you would on a Christian grave. And what do I feel about it? I rarely come here. I'll drive my tractor along Gillan's Way to the pub at dinner time, but at night I take the long way round. It depresses you. The area carries a black depression about it, especially at dusk.

The Muir of Stynie is now Crown Land, looked after by the Forestry Commission. But land officers treat the story with respect; one of them told the author, 'I'm not a local but the place worries me simply because you never see deer or a bird there: a hundred yards [30 metres] away, yes, but that place is always deserted.'

One interesting point about this ghost story is that most accounts tally in almost every respect. One version, however, goes further than the rest:

> He got the wrong lassie. He was no' a bad man, by all accounts, but he'd fallen for Elspet's elder sister and she'd jilted him. So he waited for her by the forest side there, and he got the wrong one in the mist. That's what was written on the scrap of paper, and some around here knew it. So they took him down and they buried him, in spite of the high judge.

Puharich: grey eminence?



Andrija Puharich is a controversial psychical researcher. He discovered the telepathist and metal bender Uri Geller who, he later said, owed his powers to aliens in flying saucers. COLIN WILSON reports on Puharich's theories

IN AUGUST 1971 the Israeli psychic Uri Geller won worldwide fame when he demonstrated his ability, on BBC television, to bend spoons merely by touching them, and to reproduce drawings placed in sealed envelopes.

He had been discovered in a discotheque in Jaffa, Israel, by Andrija Puharich, who was soon to be reported in the press as the mysterious Svengali-like figure behind Geller, as a brilliant inventor who was so successful that he had made enough money to retire when still in his forties. One journalist even suggested that Puharich had discovered a chemical that, when applied to a piece of metal, would instantly soften and bend it, and that he had given this wonder chemical to Geller to let him fool audiences into thinking that he had some extraordinary, paranormal power to bend small metal objects.

Another journalist wrote that Puharich had invented a tiny radio receiver that Geller concealed in a hollow tooth, and through which a pre-selected partner could describe what he was thinking so that Geller could pass himself off as a mind reader.

Andrija Puharich (above right) heard about the psychic powers of Uri Geller (above left) in 1970. He was so intrigued that he flew to Israel to meet him. Puharich wrote an account of their meeting and Uri Geller's powers in *Uri: a journal of the mystery of Uri Geller* (1974)

Not surprisingly, these rumours soon made Puharich nearly as famous as Geller, so much so that when Puharich's *Uri: a journal of the mystery of Uri Geller* was published in 1974, its initial sales rocketed. However, once the rumours spread that Puharich was suggesting that Geller's powers came from aliens in a flying saucer – which he had seen with his own eyes – people quickly became disenchanted.

Many thought that Puharich was simply telling tall stories, others assumed that he

The sacred mushroom

Andrija Puharich believed that the ancient Egyptians used the sacred mushroom to increase their psychic powers, presumably in much the same way that other civilisations have used belladonna, mescalin and LSD. Mexican Indians use mushrooms for the same purposes.

In 16th-century Europe, witches are supposed to have covered their bodies with some extraordinary ointments, combining, for example, hemlock, aconite and belladonna. If the liquid containing belladonna penetrated the skin, such as through a cut or wound, the drug could induce hallucination and give the

had been duped by a wily Israeli trickster. But while it is very hard to agree with some of his ideas, there are many that deserve serious consideration. After all, Puharich was a distinguished scientist and if, at times, he suffers from being too imaginative, at others this very fault leads him into areas of enquiry where few others have dared.

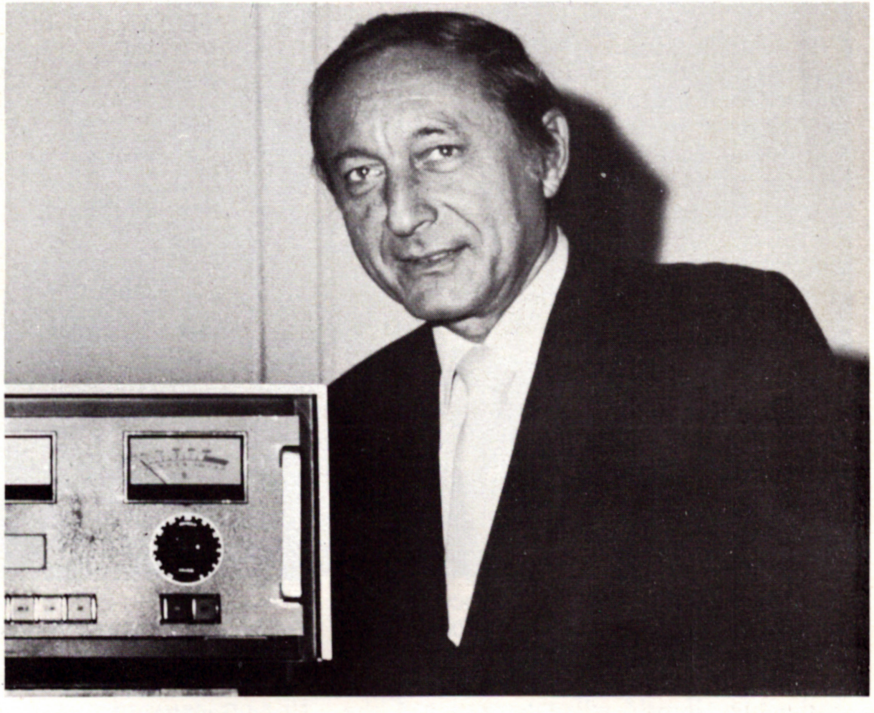
Andrija Karl Puharich was born in Chicago in 1918; his forefathers were Yugoslavian immigrants. He took a degree in medicine when he was 25 and became a research scientist, working on the effects of drugs and electrical stimulation on the nervous system.

When Puharich was 29 he was finishing his interneeship at the Kaiser Permanente Hospital in Oakland, California. One day, in a discussion on the human nervous system, somebody happened to mention telepathy. Since Puharich was a nerve specialist – someone who had been trained to believe implicitly that we communicate with each other through the five senses, which pass information to the brain via the nervous system – he was naturally sceptical about the ability to communicate while *excluding* these recognised channels.

Puharich decided to devote just two years to finding out whether telepathy was fact or fiction. Should there be nothing to it, he would return to his more orthodox laboratory work with renewed confidence.

As Puharich started out on this new line of work he heard of an intriguing incident from his colleague, Dr Joseph Lawrence. One morning, Lawrence suddenly had an important idea that he wanted to explain to his research assistant, Bill Harmon. He reached out for the telephone. At that very moment Bill Harmon, fast asleep in bed, had a dream-like impression that he ought to call Lawrence. Half waking, he reached out and picked up the telephone; as he put the receiver to his ear he heard Lawrence saying: 'Hello Bill.' The telephone had not even had time to ring.

Puharich's interest in telepathy was inspired by a story told to him by his colleague Dr Joseph Lawrence (below). Apparently, Lawrence had been on the point of telephoning his research assistant Bill Harmon. Although Harmon was in a deep sleep at that time he suddenly found himself half awake and reaching out for the telephone, *before* it had rung



Was this telepathy or simply coincidence? The only way to find out was through laboratory experiments. Puharich argued that if there was such a thing as telepathy, then it had to involve the transmission of some kind of 'brain wave', or what another investigator called 'mental radio'. In order to try to prove its existence he decided to sit an experienced telepathist in a Faraday cage (a cage made of copper wire that prevents electromagnetic radiation from passing through it) to test whether this person could still receive messages. Puharich sought a first-rate telepathist and finally chose the Irish-American medium Eileen Garrett (see page 1998) who enjoyed working with scientific investigators. Mrs Garrett was put inside the Faraday cage, the sender of the messages in a laboratory a quarter of a mile (400 metres) away, and the experiment began. However, Mrs Garrett's score was remarkably high, but what really surprised Puharich was her sudden remark: 'Your friend Mr Wallace is trying to reach you.' And just a few minutes later Puharich's secretary came in and told him that Henry Wallace wanted to speak to him urgently. This incident happened while Mrs Garrett was still sitting in the Faraday cage.

So, if telepathy is not some kind of mental radio, what is it? The clue to the answer was provided by another incident that Puharich heard about.

In June 1955 Jack Sullivan, a welder, was working in a trench in Boston when the earth caved in on him, half suffocating him and trapping him against the red-hot pipe that he was welding. As he lay there, struggling to draw breath, he sent out a desperate *mental* cry for help to his friend Tommy Whittaker, who was also a welder, working 5 miles (8

sensation of flying through the air – on a broomstick perhaps – to the fabled witches' sabbath.

Mescalin is another powerful drug that can radically alter the consciousness. In *The doors of perception* (published in 1953) Aldous Huxley described the many ways in which his perception of reality was so altered by the drug that stationary objects seemed to be flying, while others had completely different textures, shapes, tastes and smells.

Dr John Lilly, in *The centre of the cyclone* (1972), described how – after taking LSD – his telepathic powers were considerably heightened and how he left his body and met 'guardian angels' and other 'strange beings'.

kilometres) away. Although Whittaker was concentrating on his work, he suddenly had a vague feeling that something was wrong in the trench in Boston.

However, he did not know that Jack Sullivan was welding in that particular spot, because no one had been working on that trench for several weeks. In spite of this he immediately drove over to Boston; when he reached the trench he found the welding generator running but there was no one there. It was only when he looked down into the trench that he realised that there had been a cave-in, and then he saw a hand sticking out of the earth. It took him an hour to dig Sullivan out, but he saved his life.

Three points struck Puharich about this episode: Sullivan's fantastic sense of desperation; that he had tried to send a mental cry for help to his friend; and that his friend was also welding when he received the telepathic message. As with any routine occupation, welding can quickly become an automatic job, certainly for a skilled welder, so presumably Whittaker's mind had been reasonably 'empty' when he received the message. Had he been reading a book for example, or concentrating on some problem, then he probably would not have received the message, or he would not have been aware that he had received it.

It seemed to Puharich that human consciousness need not be confined to one's immediate environment – it could be 'mobile'. Eileen Garrett and other psychics agreed with this theory because they had all previously experienced a sensation that they termed 'travelling clairvoyance', when they seemed able to 'drop in' on absent friends and 'see' what they were doing. But since Sullivan was buried in a trench when he sent his message, concentrating exclusively on trying to stay alive, it could not have been his ordinary, everyday consciousness that had 'visited' Whittaker.

Puharich suggested that another mental substance, known as 'psi plasma', had reached Whittaker. He also suggested that when people are excited, angry or frightened (a state known as 'adrenergia', in which the supply of adrenalin to the sympathetic nervous system increases) they are better at sending psi plasma than when in a calm, relaxed state ('cholinergia'). In this condition, he argued, they are also much more adept at receiving telepathic messages. Puharich believed that psi plasma expands when someone is in a cholinergic state, and that it contracts when they are adrenergic.

The most revolutionary part of this theory is that the 'sender' does not actually send a message, but that his fiercely concentrated psi plasma somehow sucks or attracts that of the 'receiver', just as a high-density comet passing close to the Earth might suck away part of its atmosphere.

Impressive though this may sound, the theory is open to criticism because it suggests that whenever you are in a state of deep relaxation you are liable to be reading somebody else's mind. Nonetheless, the theory attracted much attention when published in Puharich's *Beyond telepathy* (1974).

Puharich's investigations into telepathy involved sitting an experienced telepathist, Mrs Eileen Garrett, in a Faraday cage (above) to see if it would interfere with her ability to receive messages telepathically. The experiment was monitored by Puharich's researchers (top). Mrs Garrett's powers were unaffected

It certainly raised more questions than it could answer, but at least Puharich was reassuring colleagues who felt he was drifting perilously close to the lunatic fringe by trying to make his theories on adrenergia and cholinergia sound like orthodox physical or chemical processes. As most psychical researchers know, accumulating various facts and anecdotal evidence is one thing, but fitting it all into a neat, impregnable 'model' is quite another.

While working on telepathy Puharich also became involved in another area of psychical research, which he found equally stimulating – yet equally difficult to come to grips with.

One day an American woman called Alice Bouverie showed a young Dutch sculptor, Harry Stone, an ancient Egyptian pendant;

he immediately fell into a semi-hypnotic state and began to draw Egyptian hieroglyphics. He also spoke about a drug that could increase one's psychic powers. Alice Bouverie took notes of everything he said and sent them off, with the hieroglyphics, to Puharich. She also enclosed two drawings of a mushroom with spots on the top and a kind of ruff around the stem. Puharich looked the mushroom up in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and found out that it was *amanita muscaria*, or fly agaric. Furthermore, he sent the hieroglyphics to an expert in Egyptology who confirmed that they were genuine; he dated them to the reign of the Pharaoh Snofru in the 25th century BC. They identified the writer and his wife as a priest called Ra Ho Tep and one by the name of Nefert or Nofret. Puharich also had this checked and discovered that there were, indeed, records of such a priest in the 25th century BC.

It was quite possible, of course, that Stone was merely repeating information he had previously read. There were many instances of this happening before and since, such as the 19th-century case when an illiterate American girl began to speak Latin. No one knew why until they discovered that she had spent part of her childhood in the house of a priest who used to recite Latin poems; a kind of hidden tape recorder in her brain had picked them up without her conscious knowledge and played them back in later life – a phenomenon known to parapsychologists as cryptomnesia.

But if Harry Stone was repeating information he had previously heard of or read about, then he had an unusually thorough knowledge of his subject.

Mushrooms in Arabia

On one occasion Puharich was hypnotising Harry Stone, while in Alice Bouverie's presence, in order to induce him to draw more hieroglyphics. But, to his surprise, she too fell into a trance and started writing; she identified herself as someone who had been born, centuries previously, in Arabia, and she explained that the mushroom of which Stone had previously spoken was growing nearby. When Alice woke from her trance and read what she had written, she immediately went out for a walk and soon came back with an excellent specimen. Puharich was convinced that there was a purpose behind these communications: to bring to light the forgotten cult of the sacred mushroom. In another hypnotic session, in the presence of Puharich and the writer Aldous Huxley, Ra Ho Tep began to speak through Harry Stone and demanded a mushroom, which he applied to his tongue and to the top of his head. When he came out of his trance five minutes later they tested his ESP powers. He not only scored straight 'hits' but also described exactly what was on the other side of a brick wall he had never seen before. Later, Puharich applied the mushroom to the Dutch 'psychic detective' Peter Hurkos, and was again impressed by the way it significantly increased his powers.

Puharich became very interested in the case of Harry Stone, a young Dutch sculptor, who went into a trance and was apparently taken over by Ra Ho Tep, an Egyptian priest from the 25th century BC. Ra Ho Tep explained that when the mushroom *amanita muscaria*, or fly agaric, is applied to the head and tongue of a psychic, it greatly increases his powers. On a subsequent occasion Harry Stone applied the mushroom to his body and found that it was indeed as effective as Ra Ho Tep had suggested

Then, unexpectedly, Alice Bouverie died. Harry Stone's power seemed to evaporate, and Puharich was unable to establish the authenticity of any more of Ra Ho Tep's information because of the absence of detailed records from this period. Puharich did, however, record this research, in his *The sacred mushroom* (1959).

After writing *The sacred mushroom* Puharich returned to his work on telepathy and his theories on psi plasma. His curiosity had taken him out of the realms of conventional scientific enquiry, and while his imagination may have come up with some surprising theories, there can be no doubting his invaluable work in uncovering facts that refuse, at least for the moment, to sit comfortably inside any theory.

Puharich and psychic surgeons, space beings – and Uri Geller: see page 2714

Red carpet for the Ripper

Jack the Ripper eluded capture so successfully that some have suggested that the police allowed him to escape – because of his eminent social status. Or perhaps the murders were part of a frantic establishment cover up? FRANCIS KING assesses the facts

IT IS UNDENIABLE that there was an underlying pattern to the five authentic Ripper killings. All the victims were Whitechapel prostitutes of the lowest class. And all, save one, suffered similar mutilations involving the throat, the uterus and the intestines.

The exception was Elizabeth Stride, who met her death in the early hours of 30 September 1888. It is likely that in her case the Ripper was disturbed by some passer-by immediately after he had cut his victim's throat, took alarm, and fled without completing his grisly work.

The nature of the four murders makes it seem possible that someone was following a carefully composed scenario, carrying out a ghastly but elaborate ritual. The ritual elements apparent in the murders have been the bases for much extravagant theorising. Thus one writer, reviving a dark and totally unfounded folk-belief of the Middle Ages, has argued that the five women were victims of 'a crazed Talmudic Jew', skilled in the art of kosher butchery, who carried out ritual murders with religious ends in view. On this matter it suffices to say three things. First, there is no evidence whatsoever to indicate whether the Ripper was or was not a Jew. Secondly, if a Jew did commit the murders his motives could hardly have been religious, because he would have been violating one of the fundamental precepts of Judaism, the sanctity of human life. And finally, all the allegations made over the centuries regarding supposed 'Jewish ritual murder of Christians' are totally without foundation.

An alternative 'ritual' theory holds that the murderer was a Russian, an initiate of the Skoptse, a religious sect that practised self-mutilation, which was still active in the Soviet Union as late as 1929 – and may even survive today.

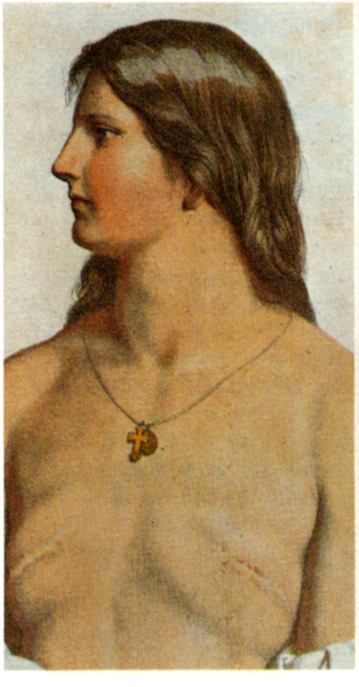
The supreme Skoptse initiations, undergone by only a small minority of members, were 'the greater and lesser baptisms of fire'. For a man the 'lesser baptism' was to be castrated, the 'greater' to have the genitals removed in their entirety. The equivalents for women initiates were mastectomy and hysterectomy.

It is known that between 1760 and 1840 – the high tide of Skoptse activity in Russia – over-enthusiastic members of the sect were accused of submitting unwilling victims to the lesser and greater baptisms with the object of saving their souls. It is suggested that the Ripper was a Russian – Whitechapel at the time had a large Russian population – and a Skoptse. With the intention of saving whores from the fire of hell, so it is argued, he offered them the 'greater baptism of fire'. When they refused he regretfully cut their throats as a necessary preliminary to the operation.

It is an ingenious theory but hardly tenable. The Russian men and women who were, so it was alleged, forced to submit themselves to Skoptse mutilation were not unbelievers. They were members of the sect who had at first volunteered for 'baptism' and then, at the last moment, withdrawn, their courage having failed. No trustworthy source has ever suggested that non-Skoptse individuals were forcibly 'baptised'. If Jack the Ripper *was* a Skoptse he behaved as no other Skoptse, before or afterwards.

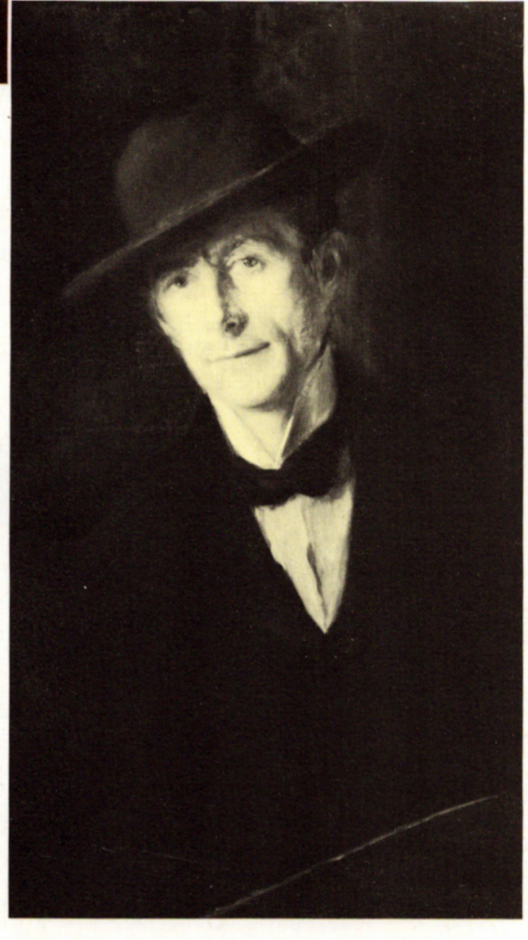
The ritual story concerning the Ripper crimes that has attracted most attention in recent years is that which claims that the murders were carried out by a gang of Freemasons acting on behalf of the Prime Minister of Great Britain.

The story seems to have originated with the painter Walter Sickert, who told it to his son Joseph when the latter was still a young boy. Sickert claimed that in the year 1884 he took the Duke of Clarence, grandson of Queen Victoria and second in line to the throne, as a private pupil. The 20-year-old Duke, said Sickert, was accustomed to make



Left: police photographs of the face and body of Catherine Eddowes (stitched up by police surgeons), one of the Ripper's five known victims, all prostitutes. Few people know the extent of the Ripper's mutilations: each victim was killed – perhaps mercifully – by having her throat slit; then her still-warm body was meticulously ripped apart, with a precision that revealed certain surgical knowledge on the part of the murderer – but who was he?

Below: the painter Walter Sickert, who implicated his one-time pupil and friend, the Duke of Clarence – an heir to the British throne – in one version of a Ripper cover-up story



Far left: an initiate of the Russian Skoptse sect, after her 'lesser baptism of fire' – mastectomy without any form of anaesthetic – and (left) the fearsome instruments used in Skoptse ceremonies. One of the many rumours about the Ripper was that he was a Skoptse immigrant – but the mutilations inflicted on his victims bore little resemblance to those that were *willingly* undertaken by members of that sect

his way to Cleveland Street – parallel to Tottenham Court Road in central London – where the painter had a studio. There, away from the stuffy routine of royal life, he would happily spend the day talking to Sickert and his 'bohemian' friends.

Among those who frequented Sickert's studio was Annie Elizabeth Crook, a young shopgirl who sometimes sat as a life model. Clarence fell in love with the girl, secretly married her by a Roman Catholic ceremony, and fathered a daughter – Alice Margaret – born in the infirmary of the St Marylebone workhouse on 18 April 1885.

Annie Elizabeth, or as she now was, according to Sickert's remarkable story, the Duchess of Clarence, returned to Cleveland Street with her young baby. A young Irish girl, Mary Jean Kelly, was employed as a nursemaid.

All the Queen's men?

Eventually the story of the Duke's romance reached Queen Victoria and the Prime Minister. The latter hired a gang of toughs who raided Cleveland Street and seized Clarence and Annie Elizabeth. The former was taken to the home of his father, the Prince of Wales, and kept in closely guarded seclusion. The latter was incarcerated in Guy's Hospital where Sir William Gull, one of the Queen's physicians, subjected her to some surgical procedure that destroyed her memory.

So far Sickert's tale is odd enough. One is asked to believe not only that the Duke of Clarence married a shop assistant but that he was so mean that, rather than pay for his wife to have a private room in a nursing home, he allowed his child to be born in the workhouse. The story's conclusion, however, is so ludicrous that it is difficult not to think that Sickert was partially insane.

Mary Jean Kelly, the girl who had been the child's nursemaid, suddenly decided to become a prostitute. She was so unsuccessful in her new career that, within a year or two of its commencement, she was a Whitechapel drab and had become the associate of 'a gaggle of gin-sodden East End harlots'.

Mary Jean knew the secret of Clarence's marriage – she had been a witness at the wedding. Such knowledge was 'dangerous and forbidden'. Instead of keeping it to herself she shared it with four of the 'gin-sodden harlots' who were her friends. The five women made a bungling attempt to blackmail the royal family. Sir William Gull was asked to silence the women – permanently. It seems to have been an odd choice of assassin; Sir William was 72 years of age and in poor health, having recently suffered a stroke. Nevertheless, being a devoted servant of his Queen, he immediately agreed to carry out five murders.

Sir William was a dedicated and active Freemason and, for some mysterious occult reason never explained by Sickert, decided to

carry out the murders as masonic rituals. He recruited an assistant, Sir Robert Anderson – later Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police – from among his masonic associates, and the two men hired a coachman, a certain John Netley, to drive them about Whitechapel.

The plan was completely successful. All five women were safely disposed of and the inhabitants of Whitechapel were so unobservant that none of them noticed that a large private coach – not a thing frequently seen in the poorer parts of the East End – was somewhere on the scene at the time of each of the Ripper murders.

Sickert's story has found at least one believer in Mr Stephen Knight, author of *Jack the Ripper – the final solution* (1976), who expressed his conviction that the painter did not tell the whole truth. Sickert himself, said Mr Knight, was almost certainly one of the masonic murder gang.

Mr Knight is a man who seems to believe that some very sinister force controls Freemasonry and that this force is willing to use any means whatsoever to destroy its enemies. The victims of Jack the Ripper, he tells us, were not the first who met their deaths as a result of masonic plotting; for 'several scholars' believe that Mozart died of poison administered by masonic hands. For such crimes:

> . . . every advanced initiate must share the blame. For every Mason who has passed the Royal Arch [a masonic grade] has willingly helped to create the perfect matrix for crimes of violence. He promises not only to condone but to assist in the concealment of murder, treason and any other crime . . .

But confidence in his ingenious theorising evaporates when one sees the nature of some of the source material. Thus, for example, he quotes at length from what he calls 'a translation of some original documents, allegedly stolen from one of the most influential and highly initiated leaders of Freemasonry. . . .' This, on examination, turns out to be *The protocols of the learned elders of Zion*, an anti-Semitic, anti-liberal, anti-masonic concoction manufactured at around the turn of the century by the Czarist secret police – a forgery so blatant that even Adolf Hitler could not bring himself to believe in its genuineness.

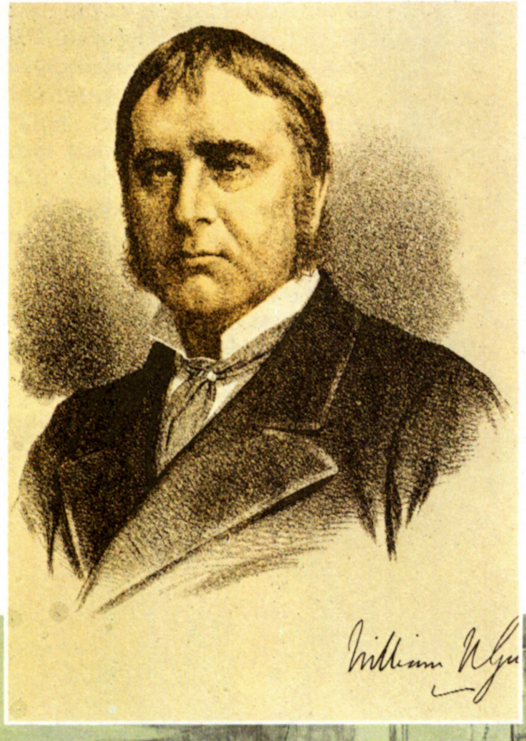
Sickert's story was absurd in every way. On the basis of it and his own research Mr Knight has constructed the least believable theory yet regarding the possible identity of the Ripper and his motives.

Further reading

Daniel Farson, *Jack the Ripper*, Michael Joseph 1972

Stephen Knight, *Jack the Ripper – the final solution*, Panther 1981

Donald Rumbelow, *The complete Jack the Ripper*, Star 1981



Did Sir William Gull (left), physician to Queen Victoria, really incarcerate the mother of the Duke of Clarence's illegitimate child in Guy's Hospital (below) – and then murder five prostitutes in an attempt to silence any witnesses, as Sickert claimed? It seems unlikely: Gull had suffered a stroke and was 72 at the time of the murders

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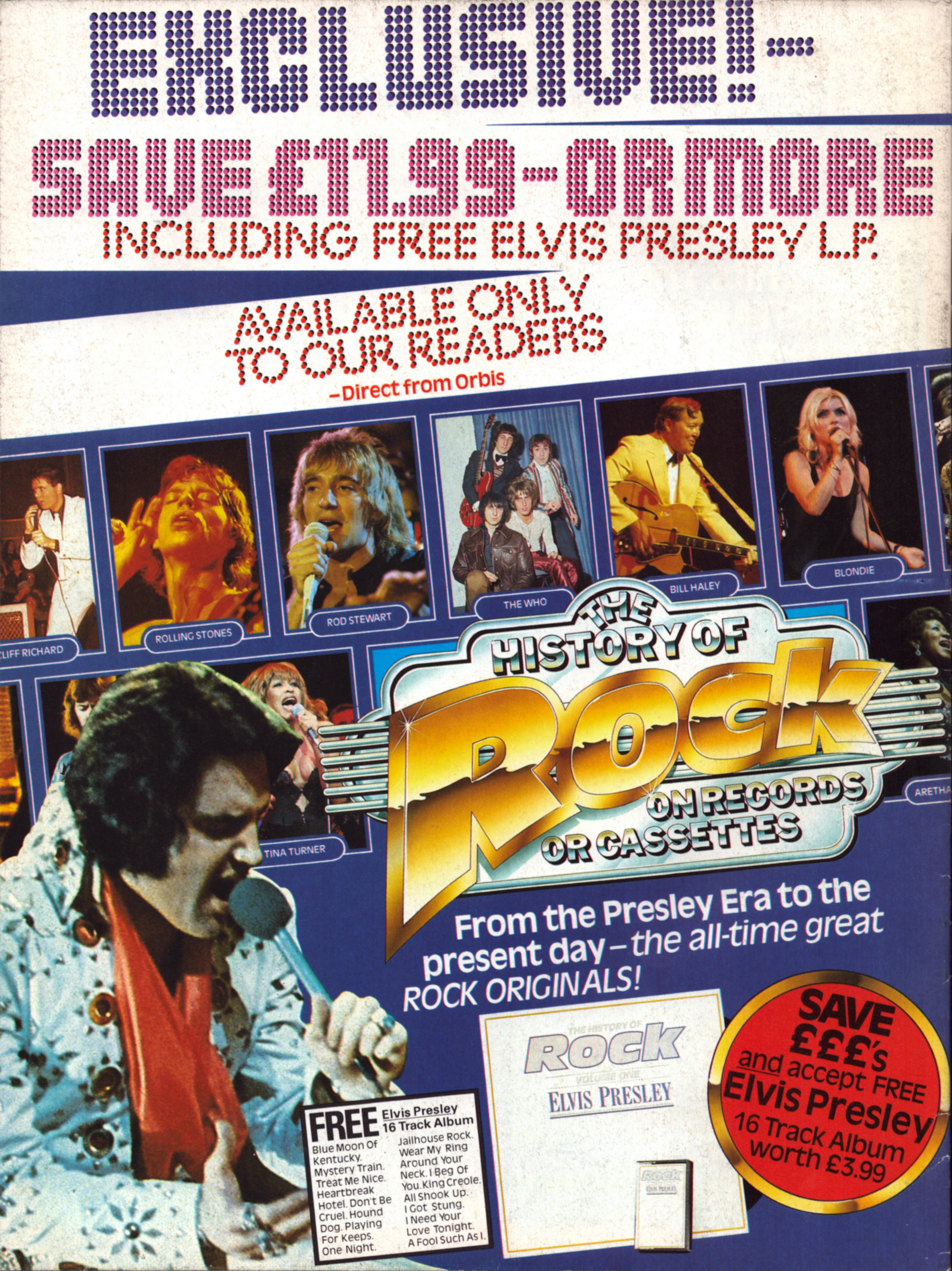
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